

## Prevention of Tickborne Disease

The number of cases of Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases in humans reported each year in the United States has been increasing steadily. The Center for Disease Control reported that there were more than 30,000 cases of Lyme reported each year to health officials but stated the actual number of Lyme cases is closer to 476,000. A higher-than-average Tick activity is expected this year due to the mild winter and early spring. As the pandemic lingers, people are spending more time outdoors which puts people at risk and increases the likelihood of encountering ticks.

The Maryland Department of Health says the best way to avoid tickborne diseases is to avoid ticks and their habitat. Ticks prefer humid environments and can be found outdoors in the leaf litter, weeds, tall grasses, shrubs, and woods. To prevent tick exposure and tick bites:

- Look for ticks in late spring through early fall, when they are most active
- Use EPA registered insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, or IR3535
- Use repellants on exposed skins for protection that lasts several hours. Follow product instructions. Parents should apply repellant to their children -avoiding hands, eyes and mouth.
- Perform a **“tick check”** on yourself, children, and pets after being outside in tick habitat. Parents should check their children for ticks under the arms, in and around the ears, around the waist, behind the knees, and in the hair.
- Treat clothing and gear, such as boots, pants, socks, and tents, with products containing 0.5 percent permethrin or purchase pre-treated clothing
- Wear light colored clothing to help spot ticks more easily
- Wear long pants and sleeves to help keep ticks off of your body and tuck your pants into your socks or boots
- Stick to the path when hiking and avoid brushy areas and tall grasses where ticks are more likely to be present
- Shower as soon as possible after coming back indoors to wash away unattached ticks on your body
- Discuss how to protect your pets from ticks with your veterinarian

### Tick Bites: First Aid

The Mayo Clinic Staff reports that that most tick bites are painless and cause only minor signs and symptoms, such as redness, swelling or a sore on the skin. But some ticks transmit bacteria that cause illnesses, including Lyme Disease

To take care of a tick bite:

- Remove the tick promptly and carefully. Use fine-tipped forceps or tweezers to grasp the tick as close to your skin as possible. Gently pull out the tick using a slow and steady upward motion. Avoid twisting or squeezing the tick. Don't handle the tick with bare

hands. Experts don't recommend using petroleum jelly, fingernail polish or a hot match to remove a tick.

- If possible, seal the tick in a container. Put the container in a freezer. Your doctor may want to see the tick if you develop new symptoms.
- Wash your hands and the bite site. Use warm water and soap, rubbing alcohol, or an iodine scrubbing.
- Call you doctor
  - if you aren't able to completely remove the tick. The longer the tick remains attached to your skin, the greater your risk of getting a disease from it.
  - The rash gets bigger. A small red bump may appear at the site of the tick bite. The rash usually appears within three to 14 days.
  - You develop flu-like signs and symptoms. Fever, chills, fatigue, muscle and joint pain, and a headache may accompany the rash.
  - You think the bite site is infected. Signs and symptoms include redness or oozing.
  - You think you were bitten by a deer tick. You may need antibiotics. possible, bring the tick with you to your doctor's appointment.

For more information, go to:

Preventing Lyme Disease in Montgomery County, Department of Health and Human Services

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